



# FarmCAT



Improving the success of agri-environment initiatives

## What is the project about?

FarmCAT is a 5 year study of the wildlife habitats which will be created through the new agri-environment schemes (AES). It has four aims:

- To explore the different approaches adopted by farmers to AES management and determine how this affects the wildlife on their farms.
- To assess how farmers can influence the success of AES on their farms through their own knowledge and by supplementary training.
- To assess what role the landscape setting of a farm plays in the successful development of AES features.
- To understand the social, financial and ecological constraints that farmers have to work within in order to fulfil their AES commitments.

## Why is it important?

Agri-environment schemes (such as Environmental Stewardship) can sometimes fail to give the best results. We need to know what contributes to their success and what prevents them working as well as they could. Previous research suggests that active engagement of farmers and improved landscape targeting could help, but until now no one has tested such ideas. The UK Research Councils have funded the FarmCAT team to do new research on AES.

## How will it be done?

We are recruiting 48 farms which are undertaking Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) options. We will visit these farms over the 5 years of the project to collect environmental management information and to survey the wildlife on the farms at the start and towards the end of the project. The farmers will be interviewed to assess their attitudes to wildlife-friendly farming and half will be trained to assess how this affects their attitudes and the effectiveness of ELS on their farms.

## Who will it help?

The main beneficiaries will be: Farmers, especially those considering taking part in AES; Visitors to the countryside through improved landscape, the UK Taxpayer, by providing better value for money spent on AES; Conservation organisations, through an increased ability to enhance biodiversity in intensively farmed landscapes; and Policy developers, by providing guidelines for improved delivery of AES.

## Who are we?

We are an independent research team led by James Bullock of the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, including the Institute of Grassland & Environmental Research and the Universities of Exeter and Reading. The project is funded by the Research Councils under the initiative 'Rural Economy and Land Use' (<http://www.relu.ac.uk>) which is investigating the considerable social, economic and environmental changes in rural areas, with the aim of informing policy change.

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